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An Oracle Consulting Checklist

Audience Acquisition Source Ideas to Explore

Checklists can inspire you, help you identify gaps, allow you to take inventory, and provide an easy-to-follow action plan. At Oracle Marketing Consulting, we use checklists all the time with our clients. In fact, we love them so much that we wanted to share some of our most useful checklists, including this one about audience acquisition source ideas.

Whether you're building your audience in email, SMS, mobile push, web push, direct mail, or another channel, where you attract those subscribers or followers from can have a profound impact on your performance. While more acquisition sources generally equals faster audience growth, not all audience growth is created equal. Some acquisition sources will generate healthy engagement and revenue increases for you, while others may generate little—or, worse, waste time and money, while also harming your deliverability, reputation, or brand image.

On the pages that follow, we list major audience acquisition sources. In addition to having our digital marketing consultants share advice about optimizing each of these acquisition sources, we also organize them into three groups to help you better understand the risk profile of the sources you're using:

1. Low-risk sources, where you're recruiting subscribers or followers during or after transactions in owned channels who are very familiar with your brand

2. Medium-risk sources, where you're recruiting subscribers or followers before transactions in owned or leased channels who are generally somewhat familiar with your brand

3. High-risk sources, where you're recruiting subscribers or followers in paid channels who are generally unfamiliar with your brand, or where you're using handwritten or verbal data collection methods

We hope this checklist helps you inventory the audience acquisition sources you already have, understand the risk profile of those sources, make improvements, and explore other promising sources. And, of course, if you'd like assistance, we're always here to help. Reach out to us at any time at **CXMconsulting_WW@oracle.com.**

Cristal Foster
Head of List Growth & Demand Generation Services
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Tips for using this checklist:

✓ **Check off** the audience acquisition sources you already have. Also, consider noting the date you launched this source, plus the date you last reviewed or optimized it.

○ **Circle** the names of the acquisition sources you want to implement.

— **Strike through** the acquisition sources that aren't appropriate for your business.
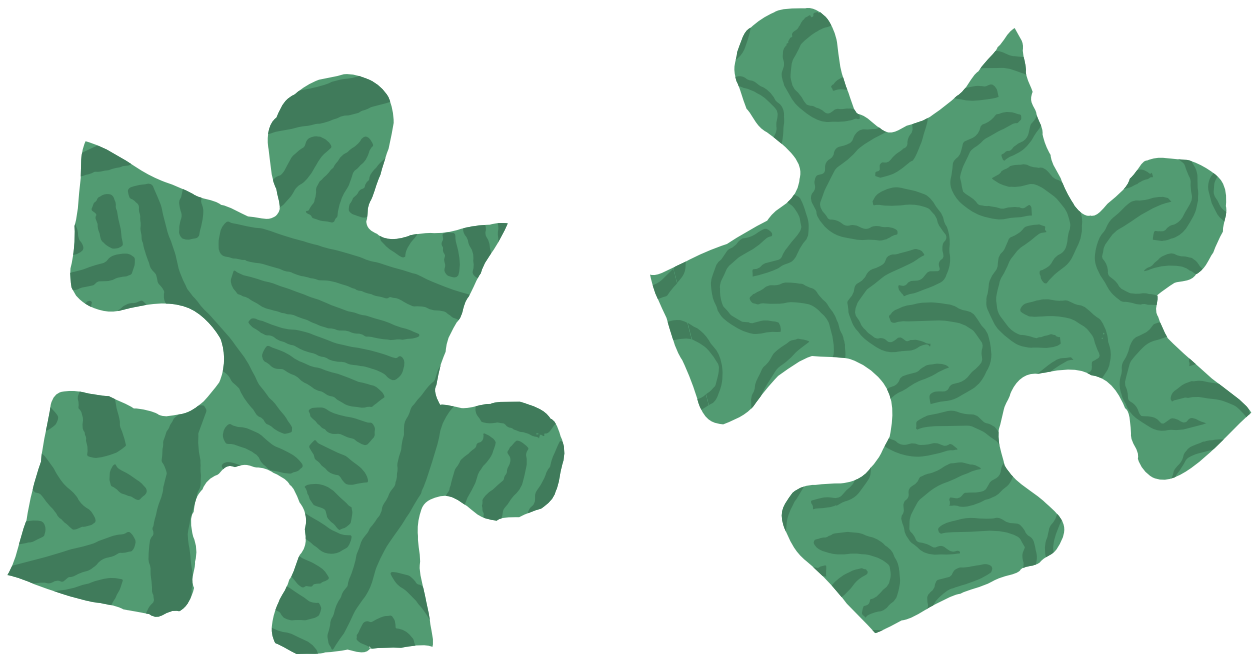
Low-Risk Audience Acquisition Sources

These are your safest vehicles for increasing your brand's audience, as many of these sources are frequented by your customers. For email, SMS, and direct mail channels, the contact information that comes in through these sources is highly likely to be valid and deliverable. And for all channels, these subscribers and followers are the most likely to engage and convert, and the least likely to report your messages as spam. Here are some low-risk audience acquisition sources to consider:

During Checkout Online

The people who are checking out are either new or existing customers. Both of these groups are likely to have a high degree of familiarity with and trust in your brand since they are transacting with you. To optimize this source…

☐ **Present a clear and prominent opt-in permission request.** This is especially important if you're going to use pre-checked opt-in boxes in countries where those are legal. Position the opt-in request immediately after the associated contact information. For example, position the email opt-in request right after the field for the customer's email address.

☐ **Follow up on the checkout confirmation page.** If they didn't opt-in prior to checkout, consider prompting it again on the order confirmation page. It's possible they overlooked it during checkout and just need one final nudge now that their order is in and they're in a different mindset.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*
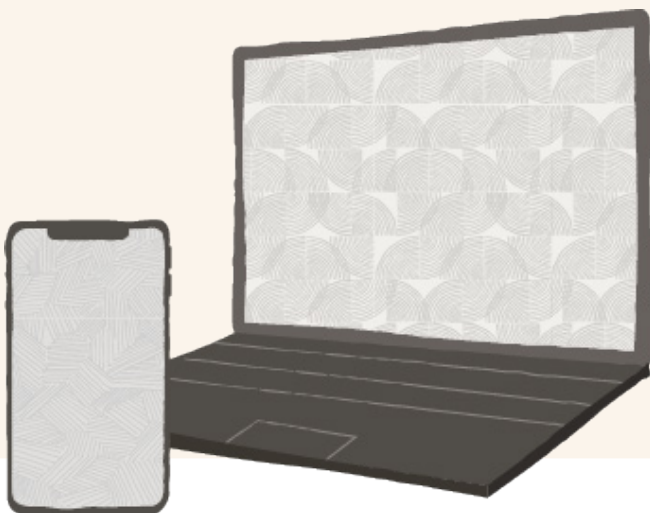
> *We've seen brands get negative customer feedback when they do the opposite of the above—that is, assume opt-in and include a sometimes not so prominent opt-out option. This comes off as disingenuous, and if customers start receiving unwanted email because they misunderstood, expect to get not just unsubscribes, but spam complaints, too.*

Lisa Stephens
VP, Creative,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

> *Make sure that your checkout process for both guests and registered customers include an option to opt-in to receive promotional emails. We notice clients sometimes have a collection prompt for one, but not the other. We recommend including a reminder that the email addresses submitted will be used for order confirmation notifications, so the customer is more likely to provide an accurate and current email address.*

Heather Goff
Strategic Director of
Email Deliverability Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Checkout in-store via tablet, kiosk, pinpad, or other digital interface

As with online checkouts, these are customers that are familiar with and trust your brand. However, these customers are more likely to be in a rush, either because they want to leave the store or they have other customers waiting behind them. To optimize this source…

- ☐ **Strive for brevity and simplicity**. Experiment with using fewer sentences, shorter sentences, bullet points, and using wording that's simpler.

- ☐ **Use as large a keyboard as possible.** You may be limited to existing equipment, but provide a full physical keyboard, if possible. Asking consumers to use a stylus and a tiny screen to input their information will discourage signups and increase entry errors.

- ☐ **Don't ask for the same information twice.** For instance, if you've already collected their email address for an e-receipt, then afterward you can ask for an email opt-in with a simple Yes/No prompt.

- ☐ **Provide a matching keyboard on mobile.** For example, if you're asking for a phone number, bring up the number pad for input instead of the keyboard. It's not only easier, it's less confusing.

- ☐ **Include top email domains as auto-fill options to help complete email address entry.** This can help further mitigate errors.

- ☐ *Follow all the tips that apply **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** Find that list toward the end of this report.*

> "
>
> *I worked with a kiosk operator who rolled out a fleet of new machines and quickly saw a meteoric rise in email opt-ins—sometimes 70,000 new subscribers a day. Our analysis found that the large, high-quality on-screen keyboard and easy opt-in process on the kiosk made for an excellent POS email opt-in experience. Soon, they added SMS opt-in, too. Their user-friendly email address and phone number capture interface became a key driver of their marketing efforts.*

Jacob Halstead
Senior Account Manager,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

During account creation

Whether for a free or paid account, taking the time to create an account indicates a fair amount of commitment to and knowledge of your brand. That makes these people great opt-in candidates. To optimize this source…

- ☐ **Emphasize onboarding.** To entice opt-ins, stress the ways in which your communications will help them use their account more effectively or get more value from it. Education is one of **the five principle messaging strategies for welcome campaigns**.

- ☐ *Follow all the tips that apply **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source**. Find that list toward the end of this report.*

> "
>
> *Allowing a social sign-on is a great way to create a frictionless account registration process. That stops members from having to fill out a form to register. However, there are privacy and compliance concerns around them, so we always recommend that permissions for promotional emails and other opt-ins are handled outside of a social sign-on.*

Jude Subbiah
Senior Consultant for Expert Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Via your mobile app

Installing your mobile app is a major sign of interest and commitment, making these people high-value subscribers. SMS and mobile push opt-ins are particularly valuable via your mobile app. To optimize this source…

☐ **Provide a matching keyboard.** For example, if you're asking for a phone number, bring up the number pad for input instead of the keyboard. It's not only easier, it's less confusing.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** Find that list toward the end of this report.*

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Don't forget your mobile-friendly design principles when you create your opt-in forms for mobile. Keep your copy tight and your font size large (14-16pt), and make the opt-in button easy to tap, with no other links nearby.

Jason Witt
Senior Director of Creative Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Via transactional messages and other one-time campaigns

Order confirmations, shipping notifications, and other transactional emails enjoy high open rates. That makes them good vehicles to appeal for promotional opt-ins from customers whose contact information you already have on file. Back-in-stock notifications and other limited-permission campaigns are also good opportunities. To optimize this source…

☐ **Don't preempt the primary purpose of the message.** An appeal to opt in to promotional messages should follow the content that's dedicated to the primary purpose of the message. For example, if it's an order confirmation email, the order information should come first, with the opt-in appeal after that.

☐ **The vast majority of the content should focus on the primary purpose of the message.** As a general rule, it's best to limit secondary content in transactional and other triggered messages to no more than 20% of the total content. That said, in some countries, no promotional content is allowed in transactional messages without a promotional opt-in from the customer.

☐ **Allow one-click signups.** Since you already have the contact information for this channel, let recipients opt in with a single click of a link or button.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** Find that list toward the end of this report.*

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E-receipts provide a tangible benefit to customers—in that they're a way to easily store their receipt digitally. Leverage the email address capture process to try to secure a promotional email opt-in. And if you don't succeed there, include a promotional opt-in appeal in the e-receipt as well.

Peter Briggs
Director of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Via an existing permission-based marketing channel

When you promote your SMS program to your email subscribers, for example, or your email program to your app users, those that click through and sign up are low-risk. That's because they've already demonstrated that they're not a bot or spam trap, and that they're likely to be an engaged subscriber. To optimize this source…

☐ **Auto-fill contact information you already have on file.** Don't make a customer re-enter their email address to sign up for promotional emails if you already have that from a previous conversion, for example. This is even more essential on mobile devices, since typing can be frustrating.

☐ **Present omnichannel opt-in opportunities in your preference center.** Allowing your subscribers to opt in to receive promotional messages via other channels is one of the many **options and opportunities you can provide in your preference center or unsubscribe page**.

☐ **Emphasize what's unique**. For instance, if they're already getting your promotions via SMS, make it clear what's different about getting your promotions via email in terms of content, frequency, and other elements.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*

Via any source when channel contact info matches existing customer data on file

The risk surrounding a signup is extremely low **when contact information matches what a customer has previously provided to you** through a checkout, registration, account creation, previous signup, or some other means. To optimize this source…

☐ **Auto-fill contact information you already have on file.** Don't make a customer re-enter information you already have.

☐ **Stress the benefits**. These customers already see the value in your brand, so sell them on the benefits of being a subscriber, whether it's discounts, exclusives, or updates.

☐ **For former subscribers** who opted out long ago, stress what's new about your email program, such as personalized recommendations or improved **communication preferences**, for example.

☐ **Be omnichannel.** Offer a variety of ways to stay connected. While most people prefer email for brand communications, some would rather connect via other channels.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*

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Don't pursue high-value customers who have opted out of email in the hopes of trying to get them to re-subscribe. These customers are already top performers for you. Your relationship with them is already strong, so don't try to fix or spend money on what's clearly not broken.

Kaiti Gary
Director of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Need help optimizing your opt-in forms? Oracle Marketing Consulting's List Growth & Demand Generation Services team can help you increase signups and improve onboarding. Talk to your Oracle Marketing account manager or reach out to us at **CXMconsulting_ww@Oracle.com**.

Medium-Risk Audience Acquisition Sources

These can be effective vehicles to increase your audience, but they come with more risk. Most of these acquisition sources involve open forms that can be accessed by anyone, not just your customers. That makes them a frequent target of **email bots**. In general, the quality and value of audience members who opt in via these sources can be mixed, so safeguards are wise. Here are some medium-risk audience acquisition sources to consider:

Open forms and modals on your website

A standard list-building tool for every company, signup forms on your website are a common way to capture visitor interest. To optimize this source…

☐ **Use CAPTCHA**. For open signup forms, use **CAPTCHA,** hidden fields, and other tools to **thwart bots** that target these forms.

☐ **Use micro-animations to draw attention.** For static opt-in forms on your website, an animated CTA button can be effective at increasing signups by increasing visibility.

☐ **Control your modals.** Whether you're using lightboxes, exit intent, and other modals, be sure to **put controls in place** that balance the effectiveness of these with how incredibly annoying they can be for visitors. Presenting the same modal over and over to the same visitor during a relatively short period may discourage future visits, costing you sales.

☐ **Leverage limited-permission signups.** Certain actions, such as signing up to be notified when a product is back in stock or adding products to a wish list, result in limited permissions to follow up. When you confirm an opt-in for one of these messages, ask them if they'd like to also receive your promotional emails. If they don't opt in, consider including an appeal as a secondary message in the back-in-stock notification, wish list item price drop notification, or other message.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*

> "
> *Brands can more than double email acquisition with a prominent lightbox. I recognize lightboxes can be annoying and brands have different philosophies about adding more friction to view things on a website, so consider suppressing visitors that are logged in, clicking through from one of your emails, or have visited in the past 30 days to remove some of this friction.*

Heather Goff
Strategic Director of
Email Deliverability Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

> "
> *Apart from large popups, there are other ways to organically weave email acquisition into your website. For example, integrating a promotional signup appeal into any action where the visitor provides their email address or phone number tends to be effective.*

Peter Briggs
Director of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Lead generation forms

A standard list-building tool for B2B companies, lead-gen forms are popular for gating reports, video and webinar recordings, and other content. To optimize this source…

☐ **Don't make opting in for promotional messages required to access the content.** Requiring an opt-in just forces people who don't want your emails to opt out or report your emails as spam later, route them to a folder that they never read, or use a secondary email address that they rarely or never check. Instead, use a prominent pre-checked opt-in box beneath the contact information associated with the opt-in—or, better, use an unchecked box. Be sure to sell the person on the benefits of having that box checked.

☐ **Consider delivering the link to the content via a one-time message to the contact information.** For example, that means they'd have to enter a valid email address to get the content delivered to them. Make it clear in the message that it's a one-time communication. You can help drive that message home by asking them to opt in to receive your promotional messages and explaining the value of receiving those.

☐ **Use CAPTCHA.** All open forms are targets for bots.

☐ **Consider requiring corporate email addresses.** If your target audience is businesses, **requiring a registrant to use a corporate email address** (as opposed to a Gmail address, for example) can help improve data quality and **discourage bots**. However, be aware that this may alienate freelancers and some business professionals who don't like to share their corporate email address.

☐ **Promote your marketing channels in your gated content.** If your content is aligned with your brand and truly valuable, then anyone who downloads it should be more receptive to hearing more from your brand after engaging with it. So, in addition to trying to get a promotional opt-in in the download form, tell people in the downloaded content how they can opt in to get more great content.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** Find that list toward the end of this report.

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Content marketers have been debating whether companies should gate or ungate their content for years. This largely comes down to what you want to build more: awareness or leads? If the former, then ungate, because you'll get more downloads and more social sharing. If the latter, then gate, and make the most of those leads.

Chad S. White
Head of Research,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Registration pages for free events and webinars

Unlike with download forms for content, people expect multiple messages when they sign up for an event. That means that they're much more likely to share accurate contact information. To optimize this source…

☐ **Don't make opting in for promotional messages required to access the content**. Instead, use a prominent pre-checked opt-in box beneath the contact information associated with the opt-in—or, better, use an unchecked box. Be sure to sell the person on the benefits of having that box checked.

☐ **Optimize pre- and post-event messaging for opt-ins.** Pre-event they expect details on how to join and more. Afterward, they expect access to recordings and additional related content. Leverage all of these touches to try to convert these customers into subscribers and followers.

☐ **Use CAPTCHA**. All open forms are targets for bots.

☐ **Consider requiring corporate email addresses if you're a B2B brand.** Again, just be aware that this may alienate some people.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*

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The pandemic forced B2B brands to pivot hard from live events to virtual ones. Through some rapid experimentation, they've learned a lot of valuable lessons about how to appeal to webinar attendees to subscribe to their newsletters and other promotional emails. Even as live events return, it's clear that virtual events have become a larger permanent part of companies' event marketing efforts.

Cristal Foster
Head of List Growth &
Demand Generation Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

On your brand's social media page

People who engage with your Facebook page or other social media accounts may or may not be familiar with your brand and may or may not view it positively. Social media pages attract customers and aspiring customers, but also attract detractors and people who are more interested in conversations than commerce. To optimize this source…

☐ **Be extra clear about how your promotional messages differ from your social media content.** Just because they like engaging with you via social, doesn't necessarily mean they'll make a good SMS subscriber, for example.

☐ **Use CAPTCHA.** All open forms are targets for bots.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*

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When leveraging social media platforms to grow your audience, always be mindful of the issues that are being discussed in your social community, in the nation, and in the world in general. If it's a time of turmoil and community members are focused on issues that don't align with your company, then they probably won't be receptive to your message. On the other hand, connecting the content your company offers to community issues will always help your brand.

Peggy Sehorn
Expert Consultant, Technical Manager,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Co-registration for sister brands

Co-registration is when a brand allows their visitors to opt in to receive promotional emails from them as well as one or more other brands, usually by ticking checkboxes. The risk is that visitors may not be familiar with those other brands, opt in, and then be surprised and disappointed by the emails they get. That can lead to elevated spam complaints and inactivity. The safest way to use co-registration is to use your signup forms and **preference centers** to cross-promote opt-ins for the other brands your company operates. To optimize this source…

☐ **Explain what the sister brand sells, their core values, and other details.** Assume that visitors don't know anything about your sister brands. At the point of opt-in, explain what they're about and why they're unique in as few words as possible. That's in addition to explaining the value of signing up to receive their promotional campaigns.

☐ **Let visitors see sample messages.** For example, link to an archive of past or recent emails so they can see what kind of messages they'd receive. For example, here's the **award-winning archive page for Oracle Marketing Consulting's newsletter**.

☐ **Send a welcome campaign or series** that's optimized for this audience. Have it focus more on educating subscribers about the brand, including what it provides and its values. Include a prominent unsubscribe link in these emails to reduce the number of spam complaints from disappointed subscribers.

☐ **Boost the visibility of your sister brands on your websites.** The higher the presence of your sister brands of each of your sites, the more likely your visitors are to be familiar with them. That makes co-registration less risky. Here are several ways to accomplish that:

 ☐ *Use banners and other internal ads to cross-promote your brands.* Test to determine where in the interaction funnel and on what webpages it's best to have these so you can increase cross-brand activity while avoiding interrupting the conversion process.

☐ *Use a tabbed website interface.* Adding a sister brand navigation bar at the top of each of your sites, like **1-800-Flowers** does, helps your visitors to be aware of and easily explore your other brands.

☐ *Use a common shopping cart.* Having all carted items across each of your sister sites show up in a single common cart that functions across all of your sites, like **the Gap brands** do, makes it easier for your customers to shop across your brands.

☐ **Cross-promote your sister brands in your emails.** Occasionally, promote major sales, important new releases, and other content from your sister brands in your emails. It's best to keep this content secondary to the messaging from the brand your subscribers opted in to hear from.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** Find that list toward the end of this report.

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Co-registration should be one of the last ways that you look to cross-promote sister brands. Cross-promotions on your website, in your emails, and on your social channels should come first, so that you're building awareness of your family of brands. Doing that beforehand makes co-registration much more effective.

Chad S. White
Head of Research,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Need help generating and qualifying leads? Oracle Marketing Consulting's List Growth & Demand Generation Services team can help you increase leads and set up processes for qualifying them. Talk to your Oracle Marketing account manager or reach out to us at **CXMconsulting_ww@Oracle.com**.

High-Risk Audience Acquisition Sources

These are the riskiest ways of increasing your audience. The subscribers that you gain through these sources may be unfamiliar with your brand or not truly interested in receiving your messages. The acquisition source may also be prone to errors, leading to high bounce rates and the potential to hit typo spam traps. Carefully consider whether to use these sources:

Overly rich signup incentives and sweepstakes

Giveaways are a surefire way to attract lots of people who want free things, but they're not generally the best way to attract an audience that wants to engage with your brand long-term. To optimize this source…

☐ **Choose incentives and prizes that are closely connected to your brand**. If you're not Apple, don't give away iPads. Give something away that only your customers would want or that exposes non-customers to what your business has to offer.

☐ **Deliver incentives and winner notifications to the contact information provided.** That ensures that you get valid and accurate contact information. Otherwise, you're likely to get a significant percentage of email addresses that hard bounce, for example, because they're made-up addresses.

☐ **Use CAPTCHA**. For open signup and entry forms, use CAPTCHA, hidden fields, and other tools to thwart bots that target these forms. Giveaways and sweepstakes are particularly attractive targets for bots.

☐ **Don't make opting in for promotional messages required to enter a sweepstakes.** Requiring an opt-in just forces people who don't want your emails to opt out or report your emails as spam later, route them to a folder that they never read, or use a secondary email address that they rarely or never check. Instead, use either:

  ☐ *A prominent pre-checked opt-in* box beneath the contact information associated with the opt-in—or, better, use an unchecked box. Be sure to sell the person on the benefits of having that box checked.

  ☐ A *double opt-in confirmation process*, where everyone who enters gets a message asking them to confirm their signup by clicking a link in the message. In this case, you still shouldn't require the opt-in for entry, as that will drive the negative behaviors we mentioned earlier.

☐ **Don't incentivize consumers to provide the contact information of others.** This will invariably lead to people making up contact information or providing the information of people who don't want to hear from you. If you want to encourage referrals, consider other methods. For example, you could provide your customers with referral codes that they can share with friends who then enter that code when they sign up, allowing you to provide the incentive back to the sharer.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source**. Find that list toward the end of this report.

> "
> *Many of the addresses that bounce are often the same— something like abc@123.com. It's the kind of address that is easy to type in and passes system checks, so people use them over and over. Because of that, if your company gives customers on-the-spot discounts for sharing their email addresses or if employees are incentivized to collect signups, you'll see a large number of those kinds of email addresses.*

Clint Kaiser
Head of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

When running a sweepstakes, one of the things that helps prevent invalid data is sending the person an email after sign-up that requires a click to complete the entry process. That will require them to provide a valid email address that they own to be entered. Even using safeguards like that, sweepstakes are a risky way to gather data because people are signing up to receive the free item and might mark you as spam if you start marketing to them afterward.

Kristine Lubeck
Eloqua Technical Services Lead,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Any source with manual or verbal opt-in collection

These kinds of opt-ins often take place in stores and at conferences and other events, which are great places to build an audience. However, the collection method makes these signups very risky, because transcribing handwritten and verbal information is highly prone to errors. To optimize this source…

☐ **Ask people to confirm that you collected their information accurately before they leave.** For example, if you verbally collect their email address at a checkout register in your store, display their email address on the pinpad, register display, or anywhere else that they can see it and confirm that you captured the address accurately.

☐ **Switch to a digital collection method**. If you're collecting signups with a paper form, replace that with a digital form on a tablet, pinpad, or other device that you provide—or use QR codes, SMS short codes, memorable URLs, and other methods to empower your customers and prospects to use their own devices to subscribe.

☐ **Use a double opt-in confirmation process and other safeguards.** If your company is unable to eliminate manual and verbal opt-in collection, then try to protect yourself from transcription errors by requiring new subscribers to confirm their opt-in by clicking a link in a one-time opt-in confirmation request message. For email opt-ins, using email validation can reduce hard bounces by catching mistakes in email syntax and domains.

☐ **Never incentivize employees to collect customer opt-ins.** Historically, this has led to fabricated opt-ins, which resulted in high bounce and spam complaint rates and ruined sender reputations.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** Find that list toward the end of this report.

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Even when you use digital entry, collecting opt-ins at some events can still be highly problematic. For example, I worked with one client who got opt-ins at sporting events and the quality was incredibly low because many people were… let's say…enjoying themselves so much that they couldn't accurately type in their email addresses. Pair that with a giveaway and you've got the perfect storm for low-quality email addresses.

Clint Kaiser
Head of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Sponsored placement

Whether it's a sponsored social post, sponsored blog post, or some other form of paid placement, these can be good opportunities to build brand awareness, but aren't typically great ways to drive opt-ins because this audience isn't likely to be familiar with your brand. To optimize this source…

☐ **Build a solid case for getting a return on this investment.** What is the anticipated value of every new subscriber or follower that you'd get from this paid placement? Based on that, how much would you need to grow your audience to make the sponsorship profitable? Does that number seem reasonable? If not, rethink or renegotiate the sponsored placement.

☐ **Promote content that facilitates opt-ins.** Ideally, the content you're promoting should give those who engage with it a compelling reason to opt-in. That could be an upcoming series of interviews or videos, a sweepstakes or contest, or something else.

☐ **Send a welcome campaign or series that's optimized for this audience.** Have it focus more on educating subscribers about your brand, including what it provides and its values. Include a prominent unsubscribe link in these emails to reduce the number of spam complaints from disappointed subscribers.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*

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It almost goes without saying, but building a direct relationship with your customers and prospects through email, SMS, push, and direct mail subscriptions makes it so you don't have to pay over and over to get in front of these people through ads. That allows you to use your paid media budget more effectively. So, focus at least some of your sponsored placements on activities that have the potential to lead to opt-ins.

Chad S. White
Head of Research,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Co-registration for your brand on the site of a non-sister brand

As mentioned earlier, co-registration is when a brand allows their visitors to opt in to receive promotional emails from them and one or more other brands. If you allow visitors to other sites to co-register to receive your promotional emails, you run the risk that those people won't be familiar with your brand, opt in, and then be surprised and disappointed by the emails they get. That can lead to high spam complaints and inactivity. To optimize this source…

☐ **Be selective about the brands that you partner with on co-registration efforts for your company.** You'll get the best results when the brand operates in a geographic region where your company has a physical presence, attracts visitors with a similar demographic or psychographic makeup as your customers, or has other core similarities.

☐ **Explain what your brand sells, your core values, and other details.** Assume that visitors don't know anything about your brand. On the co-registration page, explain what your company is about and why it's unique in as few words as possible. That's in addition to explaining the value of signing up to receive your promotional campaigns.

☐ **Let visitors see sample messages.** For example, link to an archive of past or recent emails so they can see what kind of messages you'd send them.

☐ **Use a double opt-in confirmation process.** This not only boosts the quality of your opt-ins for an audience acquisition source that's high risk, it gives you another mechanism through which to convey what your brand is about and what your promotional messages will provide. Just be sure to convey that as succinctly as possible to help maximize opt-in confirmations.

☐ **Send a welcome campaign or series that's optimized for this audience.** As mentioned earlier, focus on educating these new subscribers about your brand, and include a prominent unsubscribe link.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply* **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.** *Find that list toward the end of this report.*

Email list rentals

The problem with list rentals is that many of them are actually just list purchases. With list-buying seen as a major no-no, list-sellers have simply rebranded themselves as list rental providers in many cases. To optimize this source…

☐ **Ensure that you're actually renting a list.** A proper and reputable list rental process needs to have ALL of the following elements:

   ☐ At no point do you as the list-renter see the list-owner's list. They should only share list size, demographic, and other information.

   ☐ The list-renter crafts the message. The list-owner approves or rejects the message, or asks for revisions.

   ☐ The list-owner sends that message to their subscribers using their email service provider.

   ☐ The message is sent with the list-owner's sender name and their header and logo at the top of the email, since they are vouching for your company being relevant to their audience.

   ☐ The message is sent with the list-owner's unsubscribe link, so they suffer unsubscribes if your message isn't a good fit for their audience.

☐ **Build a solid case for getting a return on this investment.** As with sponsored posts, you should determine what is the anticipated value of every new subscriber or follower, and how much you'd need to grow your audience to make the rental profitable? If that number isn't reasonable, rethink or renegotiate the deal.

☐ **Promote content that facilitates opt-ins.** Ideally, you want your email to drive recipients to content that gives them a compelling reason and an easy way to opt-in or follow your brand.

☐ **Send a welcome campaign or series that's optimized for this audience**. As mentioned earlier, focus on educating these new subscribers about your brand, and include a prominent unsubscribe link.

☐ *Follow all the tips that apply **Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source.*** Find that list toward the end of this report.

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All of these are considered 'high risk' for a reason and in most cases are not worth the potential negative impact to your deliverability reputation. However, if you are going to pursue these, ensure you have measurement capabilities in place. They need to be tracked individually to understand the fundamental ROI to the channel.

Peter Briggs
Director of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Purchased email lists

You can't buy email permission. There's no such thing as a list for sale that's "100% opt-in." They're all 0% opt-in, which means that sending to such a list is guaranteed to result in spam complaints. Also, because many list-sellers use web-scraping tools, their lists are very likely to contain spam trap addresses. Sending to even a few **spam traps can land you on a blocklist**.

☐ **There is no safe way to use this audience acquisition source.** Consider sponsored posts, email list rentals, and other paid methods instead.

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Whenever a client wants to explore purchased lists, I always advise them against it because it almost always does more harm than good. I know that when I'm contacted out of the blue by a company, I question how they got my information and feel weary toward them. There are much more effective ways to invest your acquisition budget.

Peggy Sehorn
Expert Consultant, Technical Manager,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Need help maintaining high inbox placement rates? Oracle Marketing Consulting's Email Deliverability Services team will continually monitor your deliverability, help you optimize your engagement rates, and ensure that you stay out of trouble with mailbox providers. Talk to your Oracle Marketing account manager or reach out to us at **CXMconsulting_ww@Oracle.com**.

Regardless of the Audience Acquisition Source...

Here are some all-purpose optimizations to consider:

☐ **Follow permission and privacy laws.** Worldwide, anti-spam and privacy laws are trending toward requiring explicit permission—through opt-in forms, unchecked opt-in boxes, and **double opt-in confirmation**. Even where you're not legally required to use explicit consent, recognize that consumers are increasingly expecting it and responding positively to it.

☐ **Succinctly sell the person on opting in.** Be sure to answer the question: "What's in it for me?" No one wants email, but people do want deals, advice and tips, exclusive access, and other valuable content.

☐ **Minimize the number of fields in form.** Whether they're required or optional, the more fields in your opt-in form, the lower your completion rate will be. The person's contact information is the only essential piece of information, whether it's their email address for an email signup or their phone number for an SMS opt-in. All other information can be collected post-signup on the signup confirmation page, through progressive profiling, or through a successful conversion.

☐ **Avoid asking for sensitive information.** Asking for additional contact information and other sensitive information tends to significantly reduce form completion rates.

☐ **Use auto-complete.** For mailing addresses, email domains, and other information, enable autocomplete to reduce the number of keystrokes needed to fill out the form. It also mitigates errors that can cause your campaigns to not reach their intended recipients.

☐ **Use auto-capitalize.** For the names of people and places, autocapitalize to be user-friendly.

☐ **Use auto-fill.** When you already have form information from previous interactions, auto-fill it to make form completion easier. This is even more essential on mobile devices, since typing can be frustrating.

☐ **Provide a matching keyboard on mobile.** For example, if you're asking for a phone number, bring up the number pad for input instead of the keyboard. It's not only easier, it's less confusing.

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Given the current privacy landscape, I always recommend choosing explicit over implicit permission capture strategies. This is especially true if you do business in states or countries where pre-checked boxes and other implied opt-ins methods are not legal. Additionally, at least a dozen states in the US either already have or are considering various forms of privacy legislation, and the spirit of most of those laws is to give notice and choice to consumers.

Heather Goff
Strategic Director of
Email Deliverability Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

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Consumers are both literally and figuratively on-the-go, easily distracted and tethered to their mobile devices—don't make them think! Auto-complete, auto-fill, auto-capitalize, and providing a matching keyboard are all easy solutions to enable more efficient transactions while minimizing user input errors which are common on smaller screens.

JT Capps
Director of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

☐ **Use email validation.** For your email opt-ins, this tool or service checks new addresses to make sure they're properly formatted, are free of common typos (e.g., gnail.com instead of gmail.com), and other issues.

☐ **Consider sending a different welcome campaign for each audience acquisition source.** Use segmentation and dynamic content to welcome your new subscribers differently. For example, you'll want to message someone who opts in after several purchases differently than someone who has never bought and is opting in through your Facebook page, for example. Their history with your brand and the source through which they opted in tells you a lot about their familiarity with your brand. Use that to **craft an effective welcome campaign**.

☐ **Track the performance of each audience acquisition source.** Which sources generate lots of email, SMS, and push subscribers that engage and purchase? Which ones don't? Which ones generate lots of unsubscribes early on? Which ones generate spam complaints? Optimize and drive more traffic to your better sources, and add safeguards to or consider dropping your worst sources..

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We always recommend to our clients that they tag all records with their acquisition source. This allows them to calculate the return-on-investment of the source—that is, the cost of running the source vs. the collective revenue or customer lifetime value tied to subscribers who came from that source. If it's not positive, they can get rid of it and reinvest in net new opportunities.

Kaiti Gary
Director of Analytic & Strategic Services,
Oracle Marketing Consulting

Optimize your opt-ins through A/B testing. Maximize your signups and minimize your abandonment by testing the various elements of your audience acquisition efforts. Our checklist on **Website Optimization Ideas to Explore** is full of suggestions and advice on how to get the most out of your signup forms and other elements of your website. **Download the free checklist**.

Using the right audience acquisition sources in the right way with the right protections can help you grow your audience and your business. We can help with that—and much more.

Oracle Marketing Consulting has more than 500 of the leading marketing minds ready to help you to achieve more with the leading marketing cloud through...

- Implementation Services
- Platform Training & Adoption Services
- Analytic & Strategic Services
- List Growth & Demand Generation Services
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- Campaign Automation Services
- Campaign Deployment & Monitoring Services
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- Performance Reporting Services
- Website Optimization & Personalization Services
- Social Media Strategy & Analytics Services

Want help? Let's talk about how we can work together to seize your opportunities and overcome your challenges. Reach out to us at **CXMconsulting_WW@oracle.com**.